

# To be a Leader is to be Unpopular



By Joseph Tan  
Good Monday Consulting

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What is the difference between a leader and a politician? The attitude towards *personal popularity*. Instead of focusing on potential votes, the leader focuses on the *rightness* of his cause and his mission. Here's the fact – followers who form the majority do not usually welcome any changes to their comfort zone. Yet, leaders by definition are those that have a *righteous discontent* with status quo and seek to achieve that which is yet understood by others – a definite recipe for unpopularity.

*Any leader that is worth his or her salt must be prepared for unpopularity.*

What are the benefits of being an unpopular leader?

1. **You will achieve long-term goals.** Leaders see a vision which others do not. The reason is because most are only focusing on immediate gratification and are not willing to commit themselves to a greater cause. Sure, there will be opposition to your goals but when you experience the fruit of your labor – you will have the final satisfaction.
2. **You will gain authentic friendship.** Nothing sieves out your fair-weathered friends than a time of testing and hardship. In the workplace, are you constantly aiming to meet the goals of your employer or are you more concerned about what your colleagues might say? Do not sacrifice doing what is right for the sake of pleasing the crowd.
3. **You will offer wisdom to the next generation.** Your employees, your children – they are all watching you. Character is more *caught* than taught. If you live your life by popular opinion then there is no real value-add from you that will impact their lives.

*The degree of your unpopularity is directly proportional to the single-mindedness of your vision.* Practically speaking, you do not need to go around looking for unpopularity – it will come as a result of the strength of your vision. Your job as a leader is to keep the focus clear and avoid distractions at all cost. Your effectiveness as a leader is to determine that your followers also understand and accept the clarity of that vision as well.

*There is no such thing as an over-communication of vision.*

Here are three leadership actions for you to take in order to stay focused and single-minded:

1. **Recognize contribution.** Be attentive to what others are doing – in particular, employees need to see a correlation between their effort and the ensuing results. Even indirect tasks like administration needs to be recognized and praised. Do not spend so much time in your office that you are no longer aware of what others are doing.
2. **Reprove deviance.** Let's face it – there are plenty of distractions during the day. The seriousness of your vision is tested by your courage to reprimand those who do not contribute to the overall goal. If those who deviate are not brought back to line, you will be taken as a weak leader and lose the respect of your team.
3. **Reinforce communication.** *Silence is not golden.* In fact, unless the leader speaks up, others will take advantage and misinterpret your silence to their advantage. In other words, if you do not speak regularly to your team, who will? The one whom people listen to often enough ends up being the one they will follow often enough. The path to the heart is usually through the ears.

A manager when promoted looks forward to better perks and compensation. On the other hand, a leader who is promoted seeks for greater challenges and a higher vision. Companies are seeking for visionaries who are clear about where they are going. As they get there, the prospect of opposition does not hinder them – it only motivates them to do better and become stronger. If it means being unpopular along the way, then so be it.

Interested in a 2-day training that addresses four ways how you can be unpopular (by sticking to doing what is right)?

<http://www.goodmonday.com/leadership.html>